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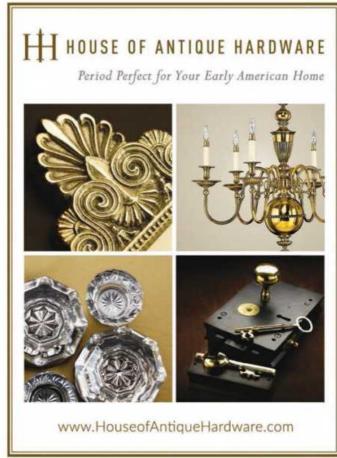


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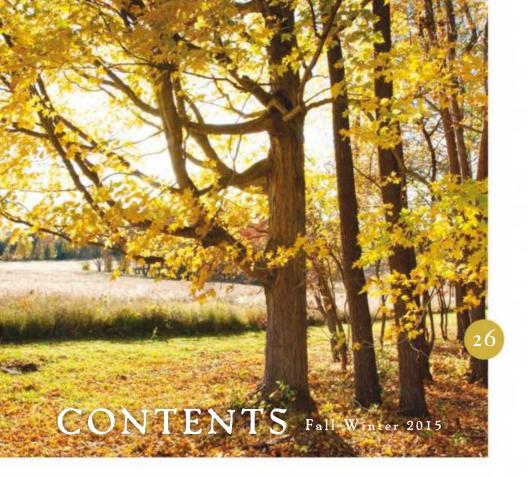
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STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY PERRY MASTROVITO Since the 1960s, this history-minded couple has filled their 1810 rural home with Canadiana, much of it tagged and offered for sale.

26 The Magic of Willowwood

BY PATRICIA POORE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY GROSS & DALEY PHOTO Surrounding a house with portions dating to 1792, a landscape from gardening's golden age unfolds.

40 Traditional Country Federal

BY REGINA COLE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG PREMRU That understated New England sensibility is familiar in this house north of Boston.

48 Corner Cupboards & Spoon Racks

BY CATHERINE LUNDIE

Ingenious ways and means for storing items in early homes teach us about beauty with utility.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANKLIN & ESTHER SCHMIDT Kitchens from Massachusetts to Ohio, old and replica, have in common a preference for open shelving and storage.

56 Early Staircases

BY MARY ELLEN POLSON

Charming, sometimes quirky, early staircases also aspired to elegance.

COVER IMAGE A MASSACHUSETTS CUPBOARD IN AN OHIO STONE HOUSE, 1834. PHOTOGRAPH BY GRIDLEY + GRAVES.

FRONT & BACK

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CHERRY COMMODE (1)

The Keller mahogany vanity from Signature Hardware offers traditional styling in a light cherry finish. The vanity measures 31" wide x 22" deep and is offered with a choice of 15 stone tops. Pricing begins at \$924.95 without a top. (866) 855-2284, *signaturehardware.com*

PEWTER LOOKALIKE (2)

Like the idea of pewter finishes in the bathroom? Try satin nickel, shown here on the Chesapeake single-hole bathroom faucet with single lever. Constructed of solid brass, the House of Antique Hardware faucet is 11" high x 6¼" wide, with a 4" center set. It's \$289.90. (888) 223-2545, houseofantiquehardware.com

WROUGHT FITTINGS (3)

The hand-forged iron towel bar and tissue holder from Historic Housefitters come with a choice of decorative heart, leaf, ram's head, or scroll ends. The rods are available in lengths from 12" to 30". Prices range from \$46.75 to \$58.75. (800) 247-4111, historichousefitters.com

PLANTER STYLE (4)

The Savannah Sconce from Authentic Designs features a candle design housed in a slightly flared glass shade. Shown in Special Pewter, it's also available in five other finishes. The lamp measures 10¾" high x 5" wide x 8½" deep. It's \$234. (800) 844-9416, authenticdesigns.com

A SHELL FOR SOAP (5)

The soap dish from Eleanor Brown Boutique is a replica of a vintage enamel piece with scalloped edges. The dish measures 6" wide x 4½" high and comes with a keyhole opening for hanging. It's available in mustard, turquoise, or red. It sells for \$13. Online only, *eleanorbrown boutique.com*

MILK SAFE (6)

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EXTENDED FAMILY STYLE (7)

The Ohio extension table from D.R. Dimes has a versatile shape that extends from 40" long up to 60" long with the insertion of two leaves. It's 43" wide and 29½" tall. As shown with a tiger-maple top and black crackle base, the table is \$2,995. Many other finishes available. (603) 942-8050, *drdimes.com*

HILDA'S SAMPLER (8)

Cross-stitch your own sampler with the Hilda Thornbroom pattern, an original design from The Wooly Red Rug. It comes with a separate pattern for a pinkeep, a cushion for holding straight pins. Thread and backings sold separately. Pattern: \$12. (612) 964-1165, woolyredrug.com

BOX LANTERN (9)

The New Haven colonial wall lantern from Lanternland is handmade in the U.S. from solid copper and brass. It's available in four sizes, with a choice of seven hand-applied finishes and four types of glass. Prices range from \$170 to \$400. (855) 454-5200, *lanternland.com*

FOR THE FAÇADE (10)

Shutter types on historic dwellings often varied from floor to floor, with more secure raised panels on the first storey and louvered shutters above. Pricing for the Timberlane interpretations shown range from about \$575 to \$593 per pair; the small shutters at top are about \$112. (215) 616-0600, *timberlane.com*





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HANGING GLOBE (11)

The Onion Globe hanging lantern from PW Vintage Lighting is a reproduction of a period original. The piece measures 11" wide x 18" long, but can be extended with a longer chain. It's \$595. (866) 561-3158, pwvintagelighting.com

SLIDE, BOLT, AND HINGE (12)

The heavy-duty sliding door and hinge hardware from Richards–Wilcox is well suited to historic barns and garages; the company has been in business since 1880. Prices for components vary. (800) 253-5668, *rwhardware.com*

BASKETS OF COLOR (13)

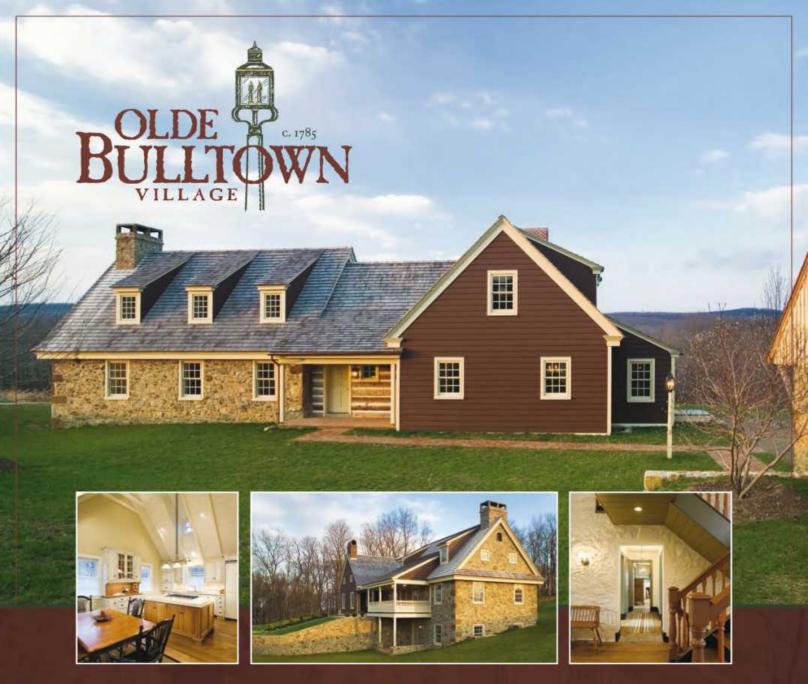
Intricate and bristling with color, the Blazing Baskets miniature quilt is a long-time best seller from Nine Patch Studio. The tiny quilt measures 10" x 10". It's available unframed for \$695. Add a frame for an extra \$80. (540) 882-3348, *nine patchstudio.com*

ART FOR THE FLOOR (14)

The Feathers & Berries floorcloth from Dunberry Hill Designs is inspired by early American stencil motifs. Painted on heavyweight cotton duck canvas, each floorcloth is sealed and finished with mitered corners. Pricing ranges from \$25 to \$40 per square foot. From Dunberry Hill Designs, (802) 874-7288, dunberry hilldesigns.com

CIRCLED RUG (15)

The Trio jute braided rugs from Homespice Décor are woven from natural fibers in four palettes (Charm, Romance, Comfort, and Grace), offering rich, earthy colors. The soft, durable rugs measure 27" wide x 45" long. They're \$49.99 each. (770) 934-4224, homespice.com



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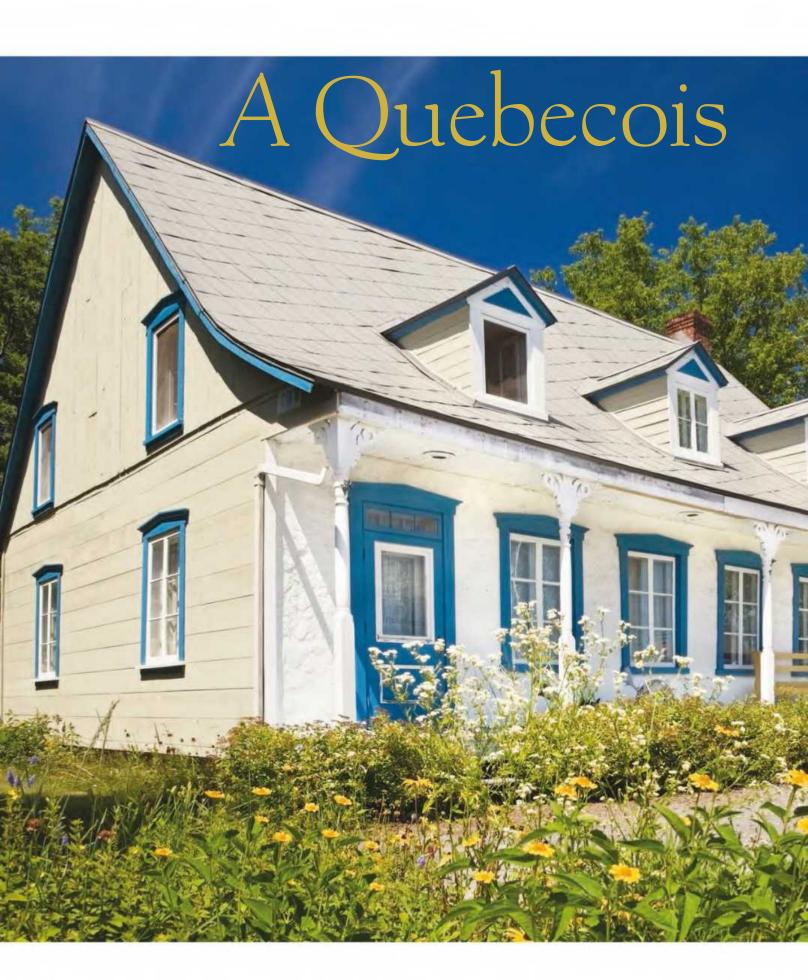
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Antiques Bazaar

BY PERRY MASTROVITO AND ANNE GORDON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PERRY MASTROVITO

HIS LOVELY LITTLE HOUSE is as bright and charming as the day it was built, some 200 years ago, ca. 1810. Located in Lavaltrie, a small town along the St. Lawrence River fifty miles east of Montreal, it once was the home of the village schoolmaster, then converted into a general store in the mid-19th century. At that time, like today, the ground floor was divided in two sections, the store on the right side, private quarters on the other, except the general store has now been replaced by an antiques shop. Rooms downstairs hold amazing Canadiana and Quebecois folk art and furnishings.

OPPOSITE: Shaded by tall deciduous trees and bordered with flowers, the 1810 house is typical of Quebec residential architecture in the early 19th century. The pitched roof with dormers extends over the porch. THIS PAGE: French Canadian folk art pieces, sold from the house.





Several rooms in this house are designed as sets for displaying furniture and items from the owners' collection—much of it for sale. Prices range from \$30 for a tin pot to \$8,500 for a rare 1830 pine armoire. Colorful birds, angels, and figurines bear

witness to their makers' inventiveness and humor.

The folk art is prized by Americans, always a fair portion of the clientele. Robert Picard chuckled that purchases mysteriously change nationality when they cross the border, becoming "genuine pieces of Americana."

Homeowner Robert Picard, a jovial 84 year old, specializes in 18th- and 19th-century crafts and furniture. He confesses to a passion for old things, which is the main reason he bought this house back in the 1960s. A "country boy" who wanted to go back to a simpler life, he made an offer by telephone, sight unseen (no internet or smartphones in those days). It was really cheap, he points out in explanation.

Still, he was dismayed by its poor condition on his first visit. But the location was ideal, and the work that lay ahead did not deter him. Shaded by tall deciduous trees and adorned with flower borders, the house is typical of Quebec architecture in the 1800s, though with a surprising number of windows for this period. While the exterior has been re-

BELOW: Comfortable upholstered furniture of the 20th century blends with local antiques and thousands of books in the main room, outfitted as the couple's living area and dining room. RIGHT: The crooked chimney probably was built that way to prevent smoke from backing up into the room.





stored to its original state—roughcast for the façade, horizontal and vertical wood planks for the sides—the interior of the house has been modified to more modern standards. Some walls were removed to create sight lines; the basement was dug to make room for a workshop; attic space was converted into living quarters. Every-

where are the collections.

"In the '60s, you could buy stuff by the truckload," Picard explained. More recently, he found it harder to renew his stock, acquired mainly through people's unwanted inheritance. But restoring and giving a new life to these valuable heirlooms was only part of his commitment to the

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The house is their personal residence, but also a well-curated antiques shop.

The painted pine cupboard sits in a "showroom" downstairs. It's filled with a display of early creamware and other serving dishes, also for sale. The house holds a remarkable stash of Quebecois folk art and Canadiana. The exterior of the house was meticulously restored; inside, rooms retain the old floorboards, beams, and trim, but the space has been opened up and a kitchen installed over the years since the 1960s.















In the kitchen, a few modern appliances betray the passage of time. Here, too, collections are displayed with abandon, including glass bottles, kitchen tools, and a hanging exhibit of cast-iron trivets. Colorful containers on open shelving brighten the room. A well-stocked spice rack shows the owners' fondness for good food.





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preservation of Quebec's heritage. Because of his extensive knowledge, Robert has often made appraisals for museums and insurance companies. His knowledge is firsthand, the result of his own research, study, and consultation with experts. There was very little information available, he notes, when his interest started in the 1960s. Picard also has lectured and written articles in collaboration with his wife, Michelle Bourdeau-Picard, who deeply shares the passion for antiques. "That's why I married her," Robert joked. In fact, they met while he was giving a course on furniture restoration, forty years ago.

Picard deplores the lack of interest in local craft, which often was associated with the hardships and poverty endured by so many. He said he was saddened whenever he learned of the disappearance of what might have been heirlooms, whether by fire or simple ignorance.

IN THE HOUSE, most furniture and decorations are authentic, dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. Collectibles came from all over Quebec and were made by craftsmen, not manufactured. Picard's items get only the minimum amount of restoration; they are never stripped of paint, or varnished. Picard's "trade secret" for conditioning wood is plain floor wax. As for the musty odor that often permeates old furniture, he has recommended using a mild disinfectant, such as diluted bleach.

The ground floor houses the antiques shop as well as the kitchen, an oldfashioned bathroom, and a drawing room dominated by an elegant Regency armoire. Comfortable armchairs provide a

ABOVE: An elegant, Regency-style armoire dominates the drawing room, where upholstered armchairs of various vintages welcome guests.





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sense of intimacy, as this room is used essentially to receive and entertain guests. The kitchen is marvelously full, with a collection of antique trivets mounted on one wall. Plain pine cabinets recede under open shelves where spices, cooking implements, and collectibles mingle.

In the living room, opened up to reveal framing and beams, a beautiful old carpet covers the floor. Thousands of books (6,800, to be exact, some quite rare) line the shelves, most of them on the subject of antiquities. On one side of the room, the dining table and chairs date to the early 19th century and show their maturity. Beyond them, the sofa is from the early 20th century, because upholstered sofas were uncommon earlier-at least in rural areas like this.

The chimney that runs from the

basement into the living room and up through the attic has an architectural peculiarity. It was built slightly crooked, not uncommon in the period, to prevent smoke from backing up into the room. But an old folk tale says that the offset was to keep witches from coming into the house through the chimney.

Either way, this house is bewitching, thanks to one man's dedication to the good work of the past. *

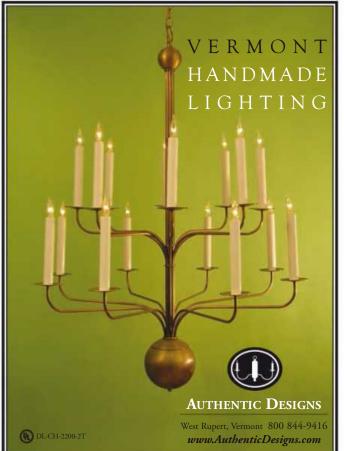
Editor's Note: Robert Picard recently passed away, after the visit with Perry Mastrovito and his camera. Robert's wife, Michelle, asked that we share his story as a tribute to his passion.

The attic of the house has been converted into bedrooms. Under the rafters, the master bedroom is cozy, its closet hidden behind wardrobe doors. Wallpaper reflects the period of the house.



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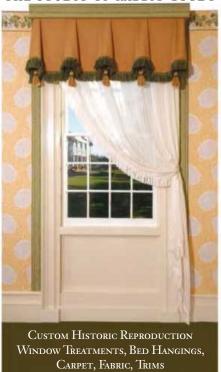
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HANDS-ON | Shakers of Pleasant Hill by Regina Cole



LSA WACHTER Walks into the East Family Wash House, one of three that survive in the Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Built in 1825, the wood-frame building once sheltered Shaker sisters who laundered with the aid of horse-powered agitators. The large copper boilers set into brick hearths are still there, but the interior has something decidedly modern: air conditioning.

"This is where we hold many of our courses and workshops," our guide explains. "We know that people want to be comfortable."

The Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill is constantly adapting to changing expectations. Years ago, basket weaving was big, but today's most popular course is beekeeping.

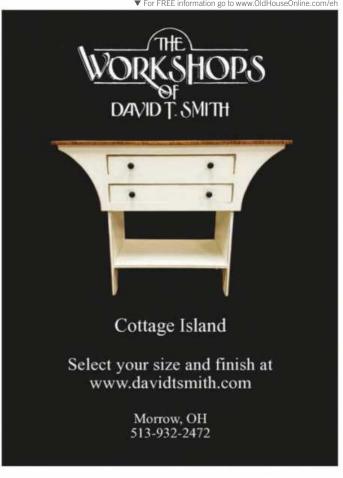
"The Shakers kept bees behind the Centre Family Dwelling, so that's perfect synergy," Wachter says. Also popular, and in the spirit of a people who believed in sustainable farming far ahead of their time, are green-cleaning courses, mush-

TOP: Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, is the 3,000-acre site of a Shaker religious community active between 1805 and 1910. ABOVE: Workshops like loom weaving are held in the Centre Family Dwelling.

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Prices for workshops and events vary, and some require advance registration.

- HAND-TIED BROOM MAKING WORKSHOP, Nov. 21, Dec. 12 In 1798 Theodore Bates of the Watervliet, New York, community invented the flat-broom press.
- BLESSING OF THE HOUNDS, Nov. 21 Traditional event to bless the hounds, riders, and fox; followed by the first meet of the formal hunting season.
- HOLIDAY REED STAR WORKSHOP Nov. 21, Dec. 5 Learn how to weave an intricate star pattern using reed.
- BEESWAX CANDLE AND SOAP MAKING WORKSHOP, Nov. 28 Learn the basics of cold processed soap making, using natural products such as herbs, beeswax, and honey.
- HERBAL HEALTH WORKSHOP, Dec. 19 The Shakers grew, prepared, and sold medicinal herbs across the country.
- WINTER GEOLOGY HIKE, Dec. 19 A hike through the nation's largest private collection of rock walls.
- CHILDREN'S TEA TIME WITH MRS. CLAUS, Dec. 5, 12, 19 Children are encouraged to dress for the holidays, and will enjoy spiced cider and sandwiches.



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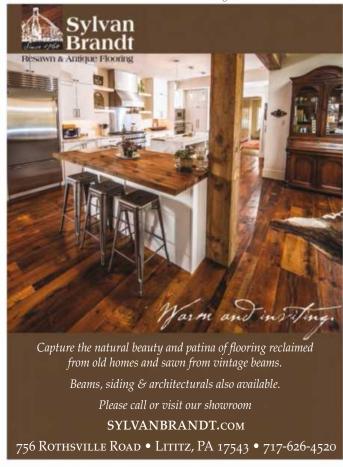
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LEFT: The Meadow View barn in fall. BELOW: The kitchen woodwork is painted "workshop red." BOTTOM LEFT: Children get instruction on growing organic lettuce in the vegetable garden, which supplies produce to the restaurant on site.

room-growing workshops, canning and herbal health lessons, and sheep shearing. But what would the Shakers of Pleasant Hill make of stand-up paddleboard lessons, outdoor yoga classes, or moonlit owl prowls? Would they approve of the annual wild game feast accompanied by tastings of local Kentucky bourbon whiskey?

The Shakers "made spirits for sale and for their own use," Wachter says. "And they grew tobacco. Mother Ann [the Shakers' founder] smoked a pipe."

The number and variety of activities in this 3,000-acre, 34-building museum, 25 miles southwest of Lexington, would probably warm the hearts of its 19th-century citizens. Founded in 1805, when three missionaries walked a thousand miles from the Shaker community in Mount Lebanon, N.Y., Pleasant Hill

had 491 members by 1823. Land holdings swelled to more than 4,500 acres. They installed a municipal water system, developed seed propagation and livestock breeding technologies, and, in a 105-year period, erected 260 structures, many built of the local limestone that also creates miles of Celtic-influenced rock fence walls outlining the Shaker lands.

Hard work and quality brought the Kentucky Shakers early success. By 1816, they were producing enough surplus brooms (75,000 of them in 1869!), cooper wares, preserves, and packaged seeds to ship them to New Orleans via the Kentucky, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers.

"They knew their goods would bring five times what they would in Kentucky," points out Jonathan Todd, a program specialist. "The trip was long and arduous, but they found it worthwhile." Such industry is a basis for today's lively scene: stern-wheeler riverboat rides, trail runs billed as "un-Pleasant Hill," lodging choices, and a seed-to-table restaurant called The Trustees' Table that draws clientele to fried chicken, corn pudding, and Shaker lemon pie—and to a superb selection of small-batch bourbons.



A popular activity is the Pumpkin Smash, held just after Halloween, when guests are encouraged to have a good time repurposing countless pumpkins into bird food and compost. "It's fun," Todd says. "How often do you get to drop something big and heavy that breaks into lots of pieces?"

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Harrodsburg, KY: shakervillageky.org *

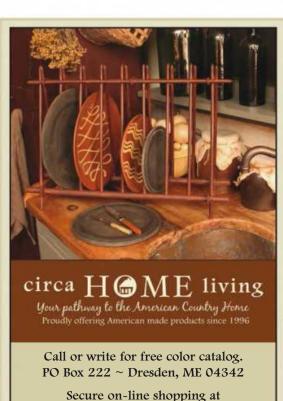




Pleasant Hill Style

Of the 21 Shaker villages established between Maine and Kentucky, only at Pleasant Hill do buildings have arched doorways and fanlights. The sect that equated simplicity with freedom famously eschewed ornamentation; plain lines and fine craftsmanship are what devotees treasure about Shaker design. But here in Kentucky, you'll find transoms over windows; below the blue wainscot, some rooms have lively red baseboards. An interior wall even sports Doric pilasters. It is tempting to see these as examples of a Southern tendency towards the rococo. Jonathan Todd, though, sees them as evidence of a community that did not always toe the line of perfect simplicity. The Pleasant Hill Shakers "seem to have taken architectural cues from other buildings in the area," he says. Many Shaker traditions do hold true. Each community made furniture in slightly different ways. "Chairs made here have finials in the shape of bowling pins," Todd explains. Table legs that go from square to round are another hallmark.

TOP: Constructed of local limestone between 1824 and 1834, the Centre Family Dwelling had separate doors for men and women.



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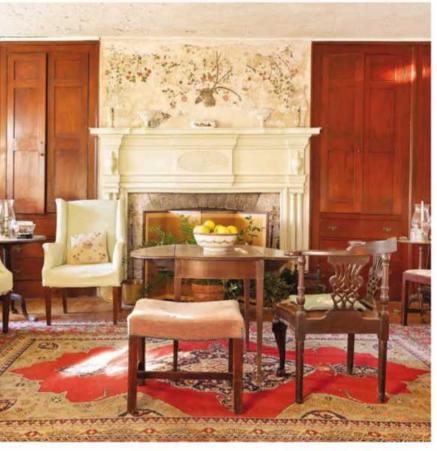
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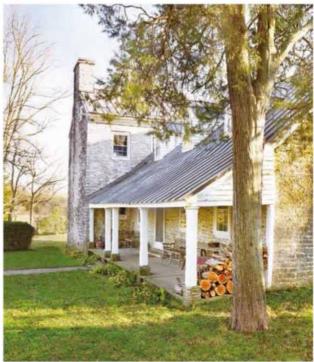
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BOOKS Old Kentucky Houses reviewed by Patricia Poore



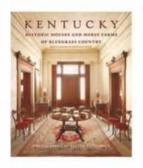


TOP: At Simpson farm, cherry cabinets flank a Georgian mantel, over which is an original stencil found under later wallpaper. ABOVE: The Simpson farmhouse in Paris, Ky., was built of local limestone in 1785, with an addition made ca. 1810.

the legendary landscape around Lexington,
Kentucky. The wealthiest town west of the
Alleghenies before the Civil War, Lexington has a rich
history, evidenced in its elegant homes. Photographer
Pieter Estersohn was invited into 18 properties for the
book *Kentucky, Historic Houses and Horse Farms of*Bluegrass Country. The houses date from 1785 to 1965,
with most of them built during the early to mid 1800s.
Seven sites are open to the public, though interpretations
for some are not typical of house museums.

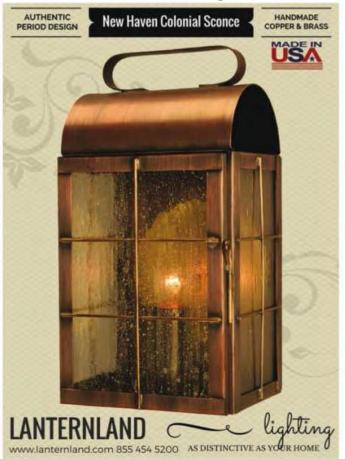
With its rich cultural and architectural history, the Bluegrass retains a tenuous hold on its unique heritage, still so much in evidence.

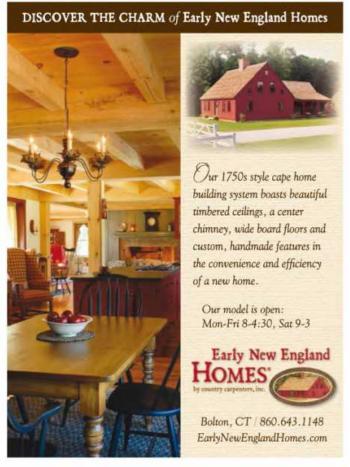
A tour holds some surprises: this is not the South of Charleston. Properties include Pope Villa, designed by Benjamin Latrobe, architect of the U.S. Capitol, and a picturesque Gothic Revival house after a plan by Downing. "While Kentucky and the Bluegrass are commonly characterized as 'Southern' today," writes W. Gay Reading in the Introduction, "...our cultural foundation could more properly be deemed mid-Atlantic, with strong ties to Philadelphia and Baltimore. Our farms were not the plantations of the Deep South..." Still, there's no mistaking the location of these gentlemen's farms, obvious in the book's aerial photographs. *



KENTUCKY Historic Houses and Horse Farms of Bluegrass Country Photographs by Pieter Estersohn. The Monacelli Press, 2014. Hardcover, 256 pp., \$60











Surrounding a house with portions dating to 1792, a landscape from gardening's golden age unfolds.

by Patricia Poore photographs by Steve Gross & Susan Daley

LEFT: A stone barn and this workers' cottage on the property were constructed of local Roxbury Puddingstone. The residence has Greek Revival elements. воттом: Vines and hostas grow near the Red Barn.



THE MAGIC OF OWN ON A STREET OF THE MAGIC OF

THE WILLOWWOOD ARBORETUM comprises 130 acres of former farmland in Far Hills, New Jersey. The old farmhouse and its outbuildings are surrounded by delightful surprises: an old-fashioned cottage garden, blowsy and asymmetric; a formal garden at the rear; a rockery and a rose garden; and walkways through woodland and meadow. There's so much to take in, whether your interest runs to "grandmother's garden," Mediterranean or Colonial Revival formality, specimen trees,

or naturalized landscapes.

Two brothers then living in New York City, Henry and Robert Tubbs, went looking for a country place in 1908. Disappointed with an ostentatious estate they were shown, Hal commented that he wanted a house like the one at Paradise Farm—an old frame house near a stand of weeping willow trees. They bought the property and renamed it Willowwood Farm. The brothers and, later, Henry's adopted son, Dr. Benjamin

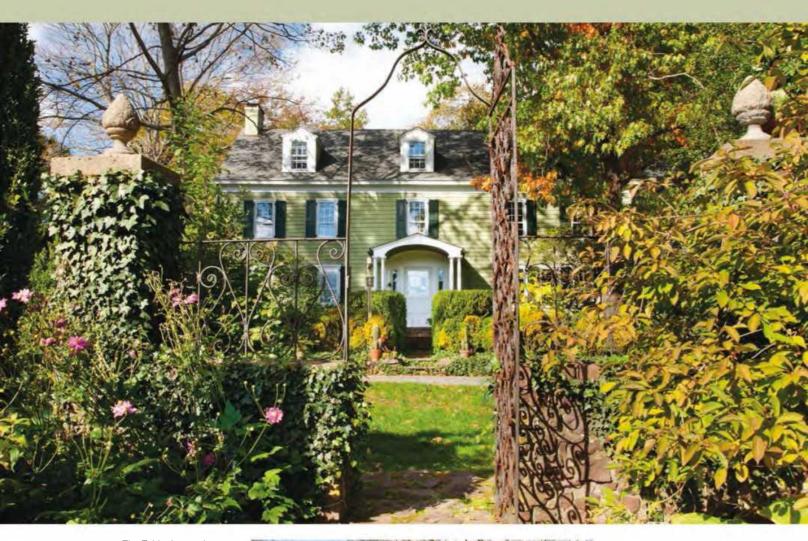
A PUBLIC TREASURE

In 1960, Dr. Ben Blackburn and Russell W. Myers, a landscape architect and Secretary Director of the Morris County Parks Commission respectively, established the Willowwood Foundation to protect the property in Far Hills, New Jersey. The public has enjoyed these beautiful gardens and meadows since 1980. The Foundation continues to support restoration of the Arboretum, along with maintenance and plantings.

Creating a guided tour by cell phone was a recent initiative undertaken by the Willowwood Foundation and the Morris

County Parks Commission. Visitors dial up the walking tour; at each stop, a short audio clip gives highlights of the major gardens and buildings.

The Arboretum is free and open to the public, 8:00 a.m. until dusk, every day of the year. The gardens are a delight from spring through fall. In the winter, the Ornamentals Collection showcases evergreen and deciduous plants that have interesting fruit or bark, or a picturesque branching habit. For more information, go to willowwoodarboretum.org



ABOVE: The Tubbs house dates to 1792, with additions made after the turn of the 20th century. It's approached through the Cottage Garden. RIGHT: Its old red paint mostly gone, the board-andbattened Red Barn once sheltered farm equipment, and now stores nursery and landscape equipment.





Paths wind through naturalistic meadow and woodland, though several formal gardens surround the house.

Blackburn, spent decades improving the landscape, adding gardens and cultivating over 2,000 kinds of native and exotic plants. The brothers made some changes to the house in 1908. The portico later was made over in Colonial Revival fashion. In the 1930s, a Lord & Burnham conservatory was added, featuring Moravian tiles, a gift from family friend Henry Mercer, the renowned Pennsylvania tile-maker of the Arts & Crafts period. (Furnished with Tubbs collections today, the house is occasionally opened to the public.)

Close to the house, gardens are designed to complement and extend the architecture. The view from the front door takes in the wrought-iron gate and the Cottage Garden. From the back door, visitors look down the center axis of Pan's Garden. Based on a Persian prayer rug, the design of this garden has plants forming a living tapestry. The formal design plays with perspective. Conical boxwoods frame a bust of the Greek god Pan at the end of the garden; a pathway between two

OPPOSITE: The old farmer's porch on the Stone House recalls life in the early 19th century. Annuals, grasses, and a climbing trumpet vine ornament the simple structure.

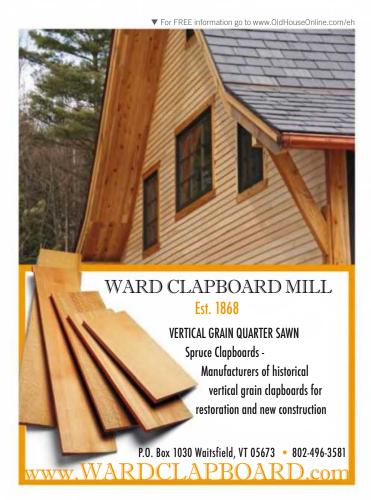


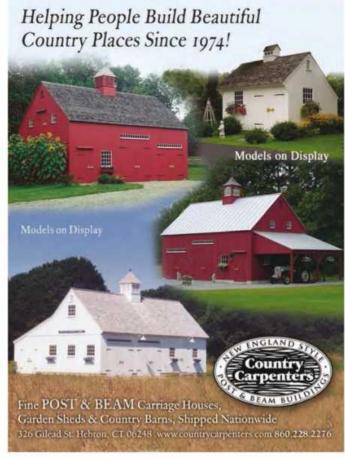


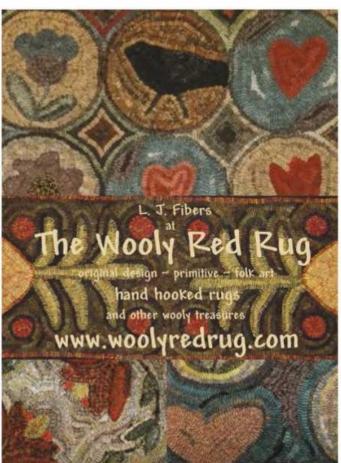


CLOCKWISE: Unpainted, the simple, countrystyle wood fence in front of the house becomes nearly invisible. A water feature centers the nontraditional Rosarie, past the Rockery and entered by way of the Chive Walk. A picturesque bridge on the winding Woodwalk over the Cypress Pool has a Japanesque sensibility; the garden includes masses of ferns, along with wild flowers. A camellia blooms in the fall amidst cherry trees, dogwoods, magnolias, and willows in the arboretum's collection. rectangular planting beds narrows as it moves away from the house, giving the illusion of more depth.

Other core gardens include the Rosarie (unusual with its Mediterranean inspiration and hot flower colors), the Chive Walk, and the Rockery. Outside the core, clockwise from the front of the house, are planted a winter garden, a lilac collection, an orchard, a bee meadow, and a hillside pasture. The Woodwalk crosses a brook in several places. Trees include oak, maple, willow, magnolia, cherry, fir, pine, and a Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia) nearly a hundred feet tall. Several picturesque barns and an old Puddingstone cottage are also extant on the property. *











Baths Tried and True

Designing a bathroom for a house that didn't have one when it was built? Here are two approaches. by Patricia Poore | photographs by Greg Premru



NLESS YOU'RE a museum curator, authenticity will not be high on the list when it comes to putting modern bathrooms into an old house. One approach: keep it simple and traditional. The master bath on these pages, designed for a recent addition to a Federal period house, defaults to Colonial Revival styling. The room could date to 1920, or last year. Painted woodwork is similar to that in the rest of the house. A freestanding tub in a window alcove feels like a window seat, enhanced by the "library shelves" conveniently placed. Colonial Revival sconces—electrified candle brackets with little shadesare a simple but pretty touch.

Marble tops an unfussy sink console on metal tubing, conjuring up both washstands and early hotel sinks. The white subway tile, too, is a standard finish from the early 20th century, when old houses often got indoor plumbing. *

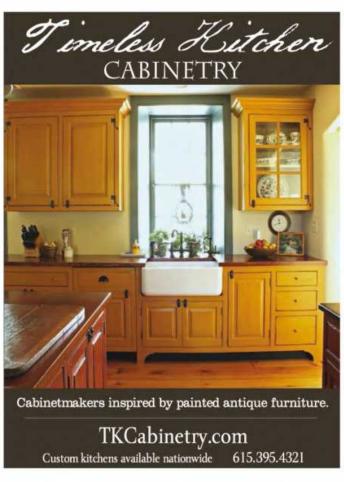
OPPOSITE: The use of traditional materials white tile, marble, and painted woodworkcreates a timeless room that feels historical yet not dated. LEFT: The tub is tucked into an alcove.

Taking a **Furnished Approach**

Another way to design a bathroom that "goes with" the old house is to treat it like a furnished room, rather than just a set of porcelain fixtures. In many old houses, after all, the indoor bathroom was placed in a former bedroom or hall so the proportions and finishes are similar to other rooms. If white tile might appear too clinical, or a beadboard wainscot too back-of-house, opt for woodwork and finishes that match rooms nearby. This room is in the old section of the same Federal house. The owner chose grasscloth to warm up the walls in her more public washroom downstairs. She added bedroom-worthy candle sconces, and hung framed art on the walls. Wood accessories and flowers never fail.

> A mirror with a bold frame, rather than a medicine cabinet, gives a more furnished look to a downstairs bath with grassclothcovered walls.



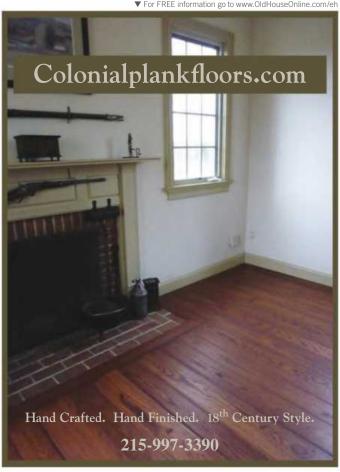


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SOURCES for baths shown on previous pages

• ANN SACKS annsacks.com also see: SUBWAY **CERAMICS BY HERITAGE TILE** subwaytile.com

GRASSCLOTH

• PHILLIP JEFFRIES phillipjeffries.com also see: BREWSTER WALLCOVERING CO. brewsterwall covering.com • GrassclothAndMore.com

PAINT

• Walls 'Ballet White' BENJAMIN MOORE; ceiling and cupboard back, 'Blue Green' FARROW & BALL benjaminmoore.com, farrow-ball.com

CONSOLE SINKS

 WATERWORKS waterworks.com also see: BATHROOM MACHINERIES deabath.com • SIGNATURE HARDWARE signaturehardware.com • URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY urbanarchaeology.com

TUB & FAUCET SET

• BAIN ULTRA bainultra.com also see: SUNRISE **SPECIALTY** sunrisespecialty.com

TOILET

• WATERWORKS waterworks.com also see:

KOHLER kohler.com

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• WATERWORKS waterworks.com also see: KINGSTON BRASS kingstonbrass.com

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• KC FAUCETS FROM HERBEAU herbeau.com

COLONIAL REVIVAL SCONCES

• **CIRCA LIGHTING** circalighting.com *also see:* **AUTHENTIC DESIGNS** authenticdesigns.com • BRASS LIGHT GALLERY brasslight.com • HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE houseofantiquehardware .com • REJUVENATION rejuvenation.com

SHADES

• BLANCHE P. FIELD, Boston Design Center blanchefield.com

SOAPSTONE SINK

• (antique) also see: BUCKS COUNTY SOAPSTONE bcsoapstone.com • VERMONT SOAPSTONE vermontsoapstone.com

TOWELS

• WILLIAMS SONOMA HOME williams-sonoma.com

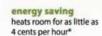


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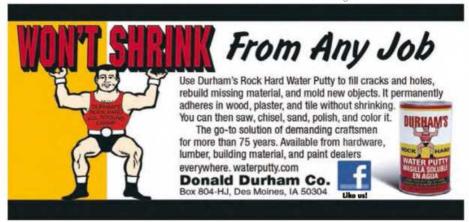


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Fall-Winter 2015 EDITOR'S NOTE



BIG THANK YOU to readers, the homeowners who invite us in, and Facebook friends for keeping Early Homes lively. Welcome to the Fall/Winter issue, a special-interest edition from the publishers of Old House Journal. * Cabinets and cupboards are everywhere, starting with the article about old-fashioned storage (p. 48), extending to collections in the Quebec house (p. 10) and the kitchens we visit (p. 52). True classics fill this issue. The house north of Boston is an example, a classic that reveals layers of history (p. 40). We find timeless solutions to the problem of designing a bathroom for a very old house (p. 32): treat it as a furnished room, or coolly default to Colonial Revival. And what's more classic than a Georgian or Federal staircase (p. 56)? * Many readers ask where they can buy Early Homes. It's distributed (twice a year) to bookstores like Barnes & Noble, and through selected stores and museum shops carrying early furniture, primitives, artisan goods, or antiques. You may also call the editorial office to reserve a copy; see p. 2.

PATRICIA POORE, EDITOR



Visit the Early Homes Facebook page! Our editor Lori Viator posts great house photos and artisan work frequently. And we read all your comments. Thanks!



A Country Federal Keeps with Tradition

THAT UNDERSTATED **NEW ENGLAND** SENSIBILITY IS FAMILIAR IN THIS HOUSE NORTH OF BOSTON.

> BY REGINA COLE PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG PREMRU

HE SYMMETRICAL CORE of the old house, in a simplified late Federal style, was built in 1830. The central block was one room deep, the kitchen off to one side. Ten years after they bought the house, owner Wendy Hodgson and her family added on, following the long tradition of "telescoping" additions that step back and alongside the main house. The extra space provided a larger kitchen and family room with a master suite above. It connects to a new, barnlike garage through a garden room—what Americans call a mudroom.

Because this was built as a summer-only residence, the wide center hall runs between front and back doors, almost like a Southern dogtrot house. Today the capacious hall is outfitted as a library. Above the wainscot, walls are covered in traditional grasscloth.



BELOW: Reproduction Windsor chairs, locally made, surround the antique table in the dining room that is part of the kitchen addition. The pale wall color is Farrow & Ball's 'Shaded White'; the trim is painted in pewter-like #7405 'Kalamazoo', from C2 Paint.



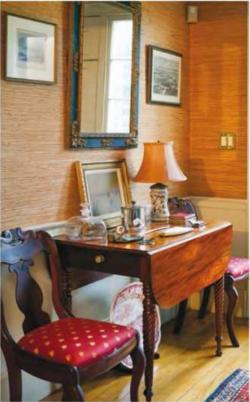
"In the late 19th century, this house belonged to an American Impressionist painter."





ABOVE: The current owners installed socalled Indian shutters inside the windows in the Federal parlor, as well as a window seat. RIGHT: Two vignettes from new and old sections of the house: The sitting area in the new kitchen wing features a paneled fireplace wall, while grasscloth covers walls over wainscot in the original wide hall-way, which is furnished with family antiques.











ABOVE: The master bedroom is located in the new wing, above the kitchen. The pineapple-carved, low-post bed with a rollback headboard, in maple, based on one ca. 1850, is a fine reproduction from Leonard's New England. BELOW: The antique dropfront desk is in the Federal parlor.



The newer section of the house has its own entry, which is a less formal way into the house. The nicely appointed doorway opens to a mudroom, then to the large, new kitchen room with its dining room and family seating area.

"I wanted a paneled entry hall," Wendy Hodgson says about the new space, which, like the original entry hall, is paved in bricks. She patterned her garden room, an informal family entry, on a room from an English manor house that she saw in an old book. The house's old soapstone sink was relocated to the garden room for cut flowers. "We reused parts of the house whenever we could," Wendy says.

The old house includes a Federal parlor, and, across the hall from it, a "country Federal" room with a simple fireplace mantel and trim. The historic flows into the new but traditional. Chippendale furniture, grasscloth walls, and gently worn oriental carpets are part of a familiar New England sensibility with its understated decorating approach.

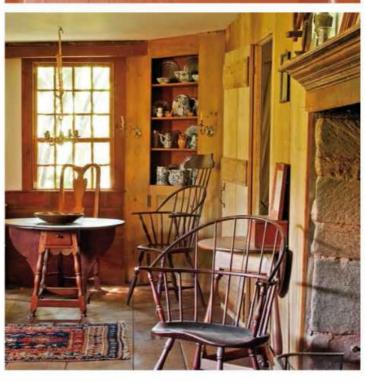
Wendy Hodgson is an interior designer with Carpenter & MacNeille, a design-build firm in Essex, Mass. She credits the firm with the seamless flow of old and new that made this house as comfortable as it is beautiful. *

FOR SOURCES, please see p. 71.

CLOCKWISE: The spoon rack below dates to the late 18th century. Near the kitchen in an early house, a dining nook is cozy with wing chairs and an antique flat-backed cupboard displaying yellowware bowls that pop against the unpainted wood. A petite 19th-century whaleback set of shelves holds a collection of tiny treasures in an owner-built replica Cape. A cabinet at the 18th-century Hollister House in Litchfield County, Connecticut, appears to have been built literally into the corner of the room.











LEFT: The Pennsylvania German scrolled wall cupboard from Martin's Chair is offered in a choice of finishes, trim paints, and other options, BELOW: The intricately caved boarded or "Bible" box from Heart of the Wood is modeled on an original from Yorkshire, England.



Cupboards boon Racks

Ingenious ways and means for storing items in early homes teach us about beauty with utility.

BY CATHERINE LUNDIE

N EARLY AMERICA, spices, dishware, pewter spoons, and bed linens were treasured, hard to come by and harder to replace. Householders kept them safe by storing them in artistic and imaginative boxes, chests, and cupboards that also brightened rooms.

The most versatile type of storage was the blanket chest. Typically handmade from the abundant wood and rudimentary metals available, this deep, rectangular storage box concealed and protected bulky items like bedding and clothing from the assaults of sunlight, rising damp, and nesting vermin. When necessary, the blanket chest could also serve as a bench, table surface, or bed.

In its simplest form, the blanket chest was just a hinged lid opening onto a large wooden box. As the form grew more refined, drawers were added beneath for specialized storage, and legs raised it off those damp floors. Ultimately, the chest evolved into the standing chest of drawers common since the late 18th century.

A variety of smaller chests served specific functions. The Bible box, for example, was of a size to hold a hefty folio-sized Bible, yet it often served as a document box for valuable papers, family records, or writing materials. At an average size of 2' wide by 16" deep, the tops were used as writing surfaces and remained undecorated. Dedicated docuCLOCKWISE: The little reproduction pipe box from D.R. Dimes is a highly developed version of the form, with two carvings, an ogee bracket base, and shaped sides. A one-door cupboard with grained and sunburst painting is from D.R. Coble & Co. With inlaid compass stars, the dovetailed blanket chest from LeFort Fine Furniture has a cedar lining and bracketed ogee feet.



TOP RIGHT: A reproduction of a 1797 Bucks County, Pennsylvania, saltbox from Adam Mathews.

ment boxes were usually smaller.

Wealthy families had their own specialized chests. The sugar chest was built with a locking flathinged top to safeguard against humidity, pests, and theft. The interior was divided into two sections, one each for light and dark sugar. Drawers beneath held tea, coffee, or spices. Since sugar was such a valuable commodity, the chest—crafted from valuable hardwood such as cherry or walnut, and often inlaid—was displayed prominently in the dining room or parlor.

The spice chest also found in the homes of the well-to-do. A luxury item, it too was made of fine wood with costly inlay, and its complicated interior design required a skilled craftsman. An arrangement of small drawers held spices, but many examples had false bottoms or backs that hid secret compartments, or cornice mouldings with a secret

drawer to conceal small valuables. Perhaps most delightful are the various small, utilitarian storage items that brightened austere early interiors. These rustic pieces were often built by a country carpenter, joiner, or homeowner, and each was as individual as its maker. Spoon racks, wall boxes, saltboxes, shelves, racks, and sconces often had whimsical design elements, from lollipop- or tombstone-shaped backboards to chip carving or paint decoration.

Salt was vital to colonial food production, used to preserve fish, meat, vegetables, cheese, and butter. The saltbox always hung by the hearth, its hinged lid easy to open during cooking. Salt came in lump form and the heat of the fire helped keep it dry so that it could be pounded into free-flowing grains. Occasionally a brick was removed from the hearth to create a "salt niche" to boost drying.

The hanging spoon rack was the



selected SOURCES

PERIOD REPRODUCTIONS

- ADAM MATHEWS FURNITURE MAKER (610) 286-9787, adammathewsfurniture.com Paint-decorated chests & cupboards of both Pennsylvania and New England traditions.
- ANDERSEN & STAUFFER FURNITURE MAKERS (717) 626- 6776, andersenandstauffer.com High-style cupboards & valuables/spice chests.
- BENNER'S WOODWORKING, (800) 800-0611, bennerswoodworking.com *Handmade* 18th- and 19th-century furniture.
- CIRCA HOME LIVING (888) 887-1820, circahomeliving.com *Blanket* chests & smaller storage.
- COLONIAL AMERICAN FURNISHINGS (614) 893-2336, cafurnishings.com *Large* collection of rustic milk-painted smalls.
- D.R. COBLE & CO. (260) 665-2362, drcobleandcompany.com *Grained & fancy-painted furniture & smalls*.
- D.R. DIMES (603) 942-8050, drdimes.com Chests, cupboards, wall & corner cupboards, pipe boxes.
- HEART OF THE WOOD (802) 879-5379, heartofthewood.com Joined, turned & boarded pieces in 17th century tradition.
- MARTIN'S CHAIR (717) 355-2177, martinschair .com *Cupboards & hanging cupboards*.
- **LEFORT FINE FURNITURE** (888) 524-4907, lefortfurnituremakers.com *Standard* and entertainment cupboards.
- **OLEY VALLEY REPRODUCTIONS** (610) 689-5885, oleyvalleyreproductions.com *Pennsylvania* painted cupboards & chests.
- **PENNSYLVANIA TRADITIONS** (610) 584-8218, pennsylvaniatraditions.com *Painted cupboards, butches, wall boxes.*
- POST AND BEAM PERIOD HOME FURNISHINGS (309 726-2662, postandbeamperiod.com Wall boxes & freestanding cupboards.
- PRIMITIVES IN PINE (207) 929-4321 Wall & hanging cupboards.



Corner Cupboards

With increasing prosperity in the 18th century, the cupboard migrated from keeping room to parlor, evolving into that great showpiece of American interior design: the built-in corner cupboard. Running from floor to ceiling, it was divided into an upper open display case and a lower, smaller, concealed storage space. Plain, oil-varnished wood gave way to a finish painted the same color as a room's woodwork, or grain-painted to look like mahogany, rosewood, or tiger maple.

In the early 1700s, the upper cabinet took on a dome or shell shape framed by fluted pilasters and dentil moulding. Between roughly 1750 and 1790, Chippendale influence introduced the broken pediment scroll. Decorative carving in the popular patterns of shells, rosettes, bellflowers, and the like appeared and, with the emergence of Federal design (ca. 1780–1820), so did pineapples and stars.

Glass became affordable in the first years of the 19th century, and cupboards had glazed, rectangular upper doors with muntins. High-style, Adamesque cupboards in the Federal period bore increasingly ornate, semi-circular fanlight designs. Often elliptical in shape, their wood muntins were replaced by leaded glass in fanciful patterns from sunbursts to delicate spider-webs.

ancestor of those collector racks that feature shelves with slots from which spoons are suspended. While some were crafted solely to hold spoons, others included a dowel for a dish towel or sometimes a drawer for a pipe and tobacco.

Pipes frequently had a dedicated box, especially in taverns. The hanging pipe box stored communal, longstemmed clay pipes on tiered racks or in an open box, with a tobacco drawer. Pub patrons would break off the tip used by the previous smoker until eventually the pipe was used up and discarded.

Inevitably, there was an equivalent of today's junk drawer: the hanging kitchen box. Candles, knives, spoons, string, the rusty nail that Johnny picked up: all went into the catchall bin.

Hanging wall racks and shelves abounded. "Sets of shelves," as they were originally called, were made of soft pine, birch, or maple. Cherry and walnut were not unknown, but soft woods were easier to manage with rudimentary tools.

Closely related to "sets of shelves" was the built-in side cupboard, an early and often rough piece. Tall and shallow in relation to height and width, side cupboards were regularly built without a back or feet. Its name may derive from its placement to one side of the room. The cupboard might have two doors, an upper and lower, or four doors, two each top and bottom, which open in the center. The most finished examples had a plain cornice, with shelves grooved to hold plates.

The freestanding cupboard, with feet and cornice, required carpentry skill. Skirt and stiles often featured carving, a popular design being the scalloped edge. This was a folk interpretation of the highdesign carved shell motif introduced to American furniture with the William and Mary style (circa 1690-1730).

The fireplace cupboard was a clever use of space. It might flank the fireplace left and right, be slotted in above the mantel, or built into the sides. *

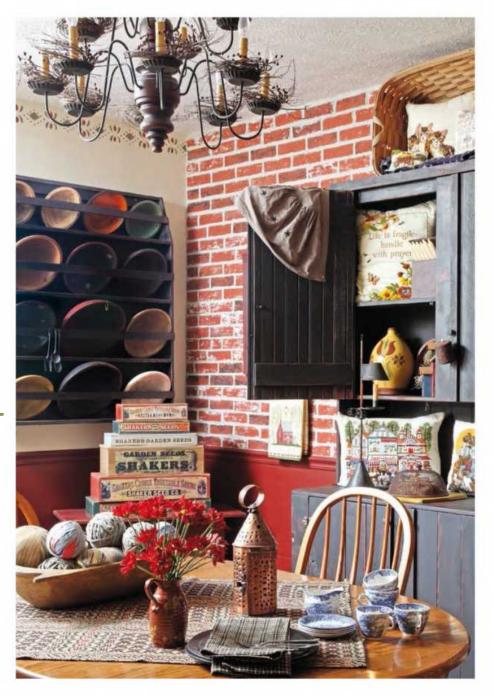
ABOVE: Andersen & Stauffer's painted corner cupboard is based on an 1817 original from Berks County, Pennsylvania. BELOW: So called because of its long, tall shape, the Shaker Chimney Cupboard from Benner's Woodworking is a reproduction of a piece from about 1790.



A bowl rack becomes an object of beauty in this house in rural Ohio, built in colonial style. Hand stitched and hand built are keys to the look. Every object in the room is unique, antique, or handcrafted, with the varied textures of brick, wicker, wood, and metal. One door in the cupboard is often left open to add display space.

in the OPEI

What these kitchens. from Massachusetts to Ohio, have in common is a preference for antiqued surfaces and open storage. Bowl and plate racks, plain shelving, glassfronted cabinets, and old cupboards with doors left open offer pretty and practical display. PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANKLIN & ESTHER SCHMIDT



Centered between custom cabinets is a display niche, with shelves that hold the family's collection of antique salt-glaze crockery and assorted boxes. An early painted country table doubles as a tabletop and kitchen prep area. The table is also used for casual meals. Early houses had similar setups, where display and storage met.



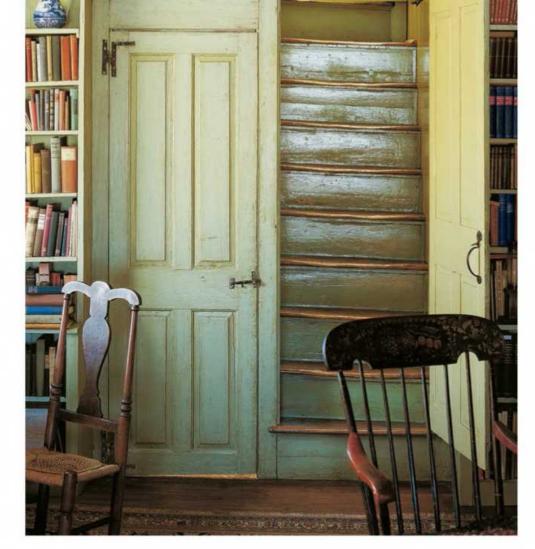




A craftsman in the way of fine carpenters and furniture makers who came before, the owner of this house was happy to find a true original, a Massachusetts Federal. He made the colonial-style cabinets with their distressed finish. Open shelving displays vintage (though not antique) ceramics and dishware. The owner built the apothecaries, which hide small appliances; he also refinished existing glass-fronted cabinets to match. His wife made the woven runner tacked up over the window with rosehead nails.

FOR SOURCES, please see p. 71.

Placing shelves on walls was easy enough. for the roughest carpenter. In this Ohio house, good design uses closed cabinets and scallopend display shelves, all in mustard-color milk paint for a warm glow. The open corner displays crockery and ceramics and other practical items. The plain window treatment adds color and movement.



A boxed stair with two closed stringers, in New England: the steep steps of this straight staircase have wellworn treads.

Early Staircases WINDER, BOX & SPIRAL

Charming, sometimes quirky, 18th- and early 19th-century staircases also aspired to elegance.

BY MARY ELLEN POLSON

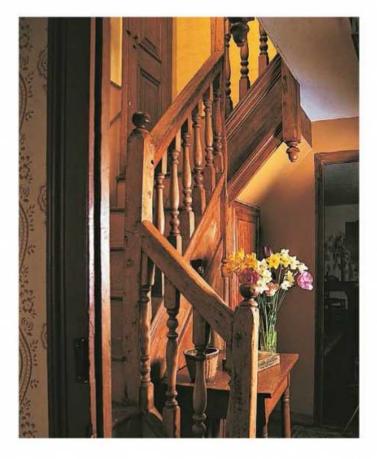
ROM THE EARLIEST colonial houses to sea captains' mansions, America saw an evolution from boxed staircases and Jacobean styles through Georgian woodwork and Federal delicacy. The first stairs were little more than stationary ladders, a purely functional means of climbing to an open sleeping loft or attic. Like the dwellings they served, early staircases were based on European models, primarily those of England.

The sturdy English straight stair usually served the main entry hall in a substantial house or castle, where large numbers of people went up and down. Straight stairs are especially versatile because they can be linked by landings, and may also incorporate several types of turns. English winding or circular stairs were reserved for more personal spaces, such as bedchambers. Steep and cramped, they were space-efficient but difficult to

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BELOW: In a Massachusetts Saltbox house dating to 1670, this narrow staircase with turned balusters and ornamental pendants was built in English Jacobean style.



ascend, making them defensible against intruders.

A simple run of stairs might rise to the second floor without a true landing, but most flights make use of full or half landings. A stair built by hand in the 18th or early 19th century might incorporate several short, straight runs linked by turning stairs or a small landing. Staircases in high-ceilinged buildings made use of the dogleg, where a straight stair bends sharply up from the landing into the next flight at a 180-degree angle.

The most common type of early stair in colonial America was the boxed stair, so called because it was supported and enclosed by walls. The stair typically begins with three or four wedge-shaped treads, or winders, framed into and ascending from a newel post, then flowing into a short run of straight, steep steps. At the top of the stair, additional winders bring the flight into the upper hall. Building a boxed stair required less work because the steps were well supported by the wall string. Boxed stairs made sense in poorly insulated colonial homes in New England, where the weather was cold and houses drafty.



This type didn't require a balustrade or newel post.

Another early type of stair was the winder or spiral stair. Since each step rotates up on an axis formed by the newel post, the outer portion of each tread is much wider than the portion nearest the center of the stair. Like boxed stairs, spiral stairs are usually space efficient and steep.

In homes with enough room for an entry hall, the

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householder often built a flight of stairs against the wall, finishing it with a simple balustrade and newel post. Spindles and newel posts were usually plain and square, although some stairs were fitted with short, stumpy, lathe-turned balusters. Most exposed staircases of the 1600s were "closed string," meaning the ends of the treads and risers were concealed by a wide slanting board (stringer). The triangular spandrel area underneath the

stair was paneled with a vertical wainscot.

In grander homes, especially those in the Georgian style, staircases were sturdier, wider, and incorporated balustrades with elaborately carved newel posts. Turned balustrades had come into vogue in England around 1600, where "the newly discovered art of turning was evidently dear to the heart of the Elizabethan joiner," writes Walter H. Godfrey in

a STAIRCASE glossary

BALUSTER The vertical posts that support the handrail; also called spindles, especially if they are slender or unturned stock.

BALUSTRADE The entire railing system of an exposed stair, including a top rail and balusters.

ELLIPTICAL STAIR A stair that winds around an elliptically shaped well.

NEWEL A large structural post and support that anchors the handrail and balustrade. The newel is usually bolted to the floor joist.

NOSING The edge of the tread that projects over the riser below.

PENDANT A carved or shaped hanging ornament, typically used to cover areas where timbers or joints intersect.

RISER Vertical surface between treads.

SPANDREL The surface, roughly triangular in shape, below a stair string.

SPIRAL STAIR A flight of stairs whose treads circle and rise in a helix shape.

STRINGER An inclined board that supports the ends of the steps, usually placed on either side and often down the middle.

Side stringers are sometimes slotted or trenched to receive risers and treads for increased support. The middle stringer is sometimes called the carriage.

TREAD The horizontal walking surface; the step.

VOLUTE A handrail end element for the bottom step that curves inward like a spiral.

WINDERS Steps that are narrower at one side than the other, used to change the direction of the stair without the need for landings.

RIGHT: This example of twisted balusters is original at King Caesar House, built in 1809 in Duxbury, Massachusetts. FAR RIGHT: The freestanding spiral staircase in the 1808 Nathaniel Russell house in Charleston, S.C., begins with a volute and has a continuous handrail.



The English Staircase, published in 1910. By 1650, the complicated twisted baluster was especially popular. Although it took nearly a century to reach the Eastern seaboard, the twisted baluster "was carried to something like excess during the Georgian period in the American colonies," continues Godfrey. "Extraordinary ingenuity was lavished upon these spiral balusters and even newels."

Such staircases were found in the wealthiest homes. Most late colonial and Federal-era balusters are very slender. Round "pool cue" balusters began to appear in staircases about 1800, as did more pronounced newel posts. With the debut of the Greek



Revival style in the 1820s, graceful curves appear in balustrade rails, along with the emergence of continuous curves.

The height of early American stair craftsmanship is probably found in vernacular spiral and elliptical designs, which were often painstakingly constructed by trial and error. *

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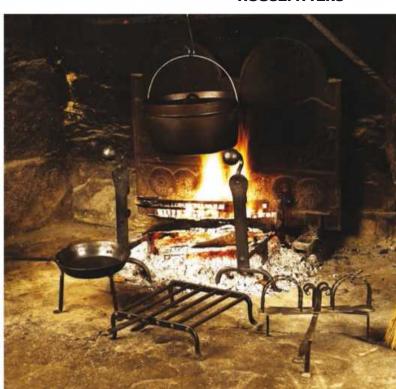
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TESOUTCES more about articles in this issue

Many articles have sources listed within their pages. Items not listed may be widely available, out of production, or antique.

Traditional Country Federal pp. 40-47

Furniture, rugs, lighting, and paintings in this home are mostly unique family pieces and antiques.

p. 40 PAINT body HC 168 Chelsea Gray; trim BM Bone Benjamin Moore benjaminmoore .com; shutters Off Black Farrow & Ball farrow-ball.com p. 42 PAINT walls Shaded White Farrow & Ball; trim #7405 Kalamazoo C2 Paint c2paint.com WINDSOR CHAIRS Walker Creek Furniture, Essex, MA: (978) 768-7622, walkercreekfurniture.com TABLE Leonard's New England leonardsantiques .com SCONCES The Martin Group martin groupinc.com p. 43 WOOD FLOORS Carlisle wideplankflooring.com MILK PAINT Tavern Green Old Fashioned Milk Paint Co. milk paint.com SINK farmhouse sink Whitehaus whitehauscollection.com FAUCET Barber Wilson barwil.co.uk/where-to-buy-usa.asp CHANDELIER Lamplight Designs lamplight designs.com JARS Marcoz Antiques, Boston: (617) 262-0780, marcozantiques.com p. 44 PAINT (top) walls Slipper Satin; trim Mizzle Farrow & Ball (middle) walls Indian White, Benjamin Moore OIL PAINTING Brian Sweetland, artist (dec.), through auctions **GRASSCLOTH** see p. 36 p. 47 PAINT walls Manchester Tan; trim Ballet White Benjamin Moore BED Leonard's New England leonards .com PILLOWS Matouk matouk.com

In the Open pp. 52-55

Makers of early and distressed kitchens:

• Benner's Woodworking (513) 932-9159, bennerswoodworking.com custom historical kitchen cabinets

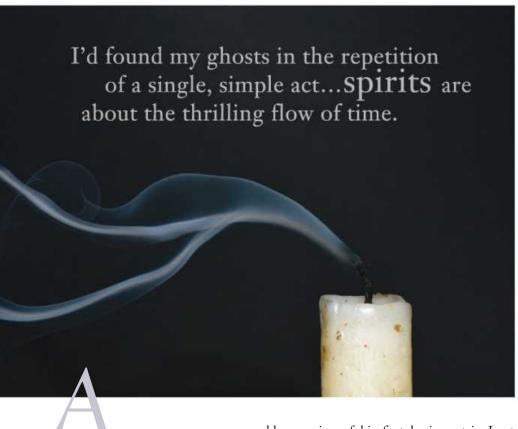
- Crown Point Cabinetry (800) 999-4994, crown-point.com handcrafted custom cabinetry in Shaker, Early American & other period lines
- D.R. Dimes & Company Ltd. (603) 942-8050, drdimes.com cabinetmaker offering period-inspired kitchen cabinets
- The Kennebec Company (207) 443-2131, kennebeccompany.com custom kitchens in historic styles including very early, Shaker & Georgian furniture-quality
- Silver Light Editions (610) 593-0444, silverlighteditions.com "new antique" period kitchens using reclaimed lumber
- Timeless Kitchen Cabinetry (615) 395-4321, tkcabinetry.com custom cabinets & tables with the appearance of antique furniture
- Workshops of David T. Smith (888) 353-9387, davidtsmith.com custom reproduction of 18th-19th century kitchens featuring specialty finishes

Early textiles suitable for curtains:

- Eaton Hill Textile Works (802) 426-3733, eatonhilltextiles.com small mill using 19th-century equipment and dye recipes
- Family Heirloom Weavers (717) 246-2431, familyheirloomweavers.com historical specialists producing traditional curtains in netted sheer, gauze, tobacco cloth & cotton fabrics
- Thistle Hill Weavers (866) 384-2729. thistlehillweavers.com Rabbit Goody's studio and weaving mill reproducing document fabrics from the 17th, 18th & 19th centuries including gossamer, dimity, camblet, checks etc.







NYONE WHO OWNS an old house, it's safe to say, has given at least a passing thought to its being haunted. In my case, that's an understatement, particularly during a time when I was obsessed with historic ghost stories by American women. In these long-forgotten tales, the dead—always female—pops back to stir things up for a widowed husband, nosy sister-in-law, or just the next poor gal to inhabit her earthly abode. The stories held real creeping horror for me, but fascination, too. How would I react if some spectral sister dropped in?

By the time we bought our first old house, I pretty much took it for granted that I'd see a ghost. When weeks passed without a sighting, I went on the offensive and sat in the parlor at dusk, conjuring all the women who'd "kept house" before me. No luck.

Then it hit me: the ghost was waiting for my husband's absence! The evening of his first business trip I sat expectantly in the unlit parlor. As twilight darkened into night I knew it was time and held my breath...then a gravelthroated neighbor hollered for her offspring. The spell was broken.

We moved next to a remote farmhouse in the country. The oldest part dated to 1780: one stone room, low-beamed and dreamily dim, with a fireplace in which you could roast an ox. Here, surely, would reside my destined ghost.

Then the previous owner returned something he'd inadvertently packed. He'd discovered it hidden up on a ledge inside the chimney: a piece of board, feather-light with age. Barely discernible in silvery old pencil was a trace of handwriting: "David Kirk, Carpenter and Betsey Han was as dirty as any old Sow. July 8, 1847."

My research later showed that Hann was the name of the farmowners at

that time. In a flash my haunted chamber became the setting for flirtatious romps between the farmer's daughter and her carpenter beau. Soon after, I gave way to the intrusion of a television set. Now when I sit in the stone room, I picture "David Kirk, Carpenter" kicking back with a beer to watch the game.

When even our restoration work failed to stir things up, I fell into daydreams about my home's past inhabitants, imagining their lives, straining to detect their murmurs.

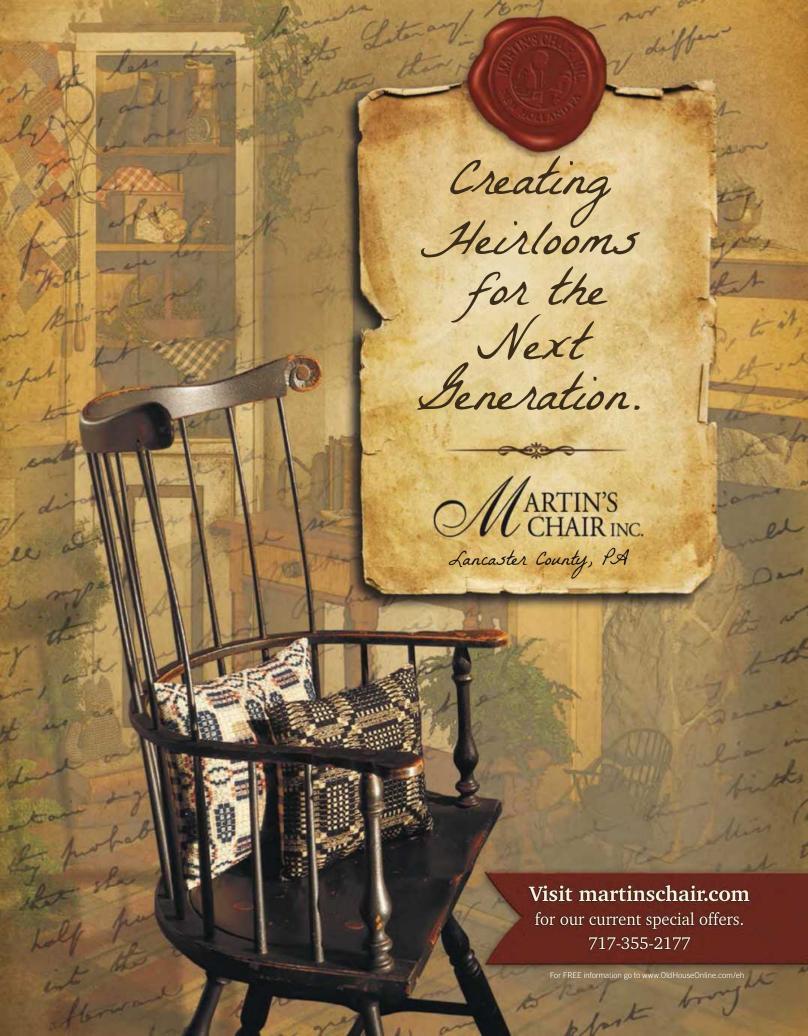
In the end, it took a thunderstorm to bring us in touch.

One afternoon's power outage lasted into the night. As I slowly made my way upstairs, learning the knack of lighting the way with a hand-held candle, I suddenly felt my ghosts crowding around me. There they were: all the other women who'd climbed these stairs by candlelight after a long day's work, who'd balanced both taper and sleeping baby, who'd held her husband's hand as they went to bed.

I'd found the secret, and it was continuity. Feeling the spirits in the house did not come from imagining something or someone, but from the repetition of a simple act, the repetition of something my predecessors had actually done.

I realized then that the women's ghost stories weren't really about the natural and the supernatural. They were about that thrilling flow between present and past that all old-house owners know. From that moment I ceased to be a spectator in my home, and became part of its long, gently moving story. *

CATHERINE LUNDIE is the editor of Restless Spirits: Ghost Stories by American Women, 1872-1926.





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